

## A Bio 195

Chapter 195: That's stupid.

"We came as soon as the new orders came in," [Golem] stated walking into Ale's apartment, "We were wondering how to get you out actually..."

That would have been interesting to see, Ale doubted Alexa would have minded leaving her out, with how Alexa had been lately she may have agreed in the spot, Ale couldn't help but wonder if Alexa was noticing something, she was spending more time with Alexandra lately.

And Alexandra was still reeling from the damage to her Consciousness Stream node from when she pulled Alexa in forcibly.

Ale would find a time to deal with Alan Harmonia and Gloria Blackthorn...

"So it's good to see you out already, were you planning on going out?" [Big Sister] asked looking around, "I don't see evidence of Alexa being around, is she still asleep?"

Evidence of Alexa being around? Ale also looked around and didn't see anything out of place, what was...Ah-

"Yeah, Alexa wanted to spend time with Alexandra. I can bring her out if you want?" Ale said understanding what [Big Sister] meant, there was no mess around, water in the floor or rest of food anywhere, the place was clean.

And that meant that Alexa hadn't been around to mess things around. Ale nodded at that, yeah, that was a good metric to know if Alexa had been around or not, one quite effective too. Ale didn't mind admitting that Alexa did make a mess of any place she was around.

"No, that's fine." [Golem] said shaking his head, "Better this way. Any idea why Vulcanus is asking or well, putting you into this mission?"

Ale did know why.

"We have shown to be resistant to this particular [Core Power]," Ale said nodding, "Also we are close to the target, or well. We are the target of animosity from her anyway."

Ale of course knew that there may be other implications, some from [Vulcanus.exe]'s machinations, but she couldn't very well come out and say those could she? Or, well, she could, but it wouldn't end anywhere well.

"And you don't mind it?" [Big Sister] asked as she sat down on one of the couches in the living room, [Golem] was shedding once again the extra rocks and returning to his gravel-like body, "The Child Puppeteer is one of your friends, right?"

Child puppeteer?

"Child Puppeteer?" Ale asked aloud after asking internally.

“That’s the name we are using for that girl,” [Golem] pointed out bringing out a folder out and throwing it onto the table in the middle of the living room, “We aren’t sure how her Core Power ended like that, but she seems to have an iron grip over those she controls, and they all seem all too pleased to serve her, so we are calling her that.”

Well...Ale wasn’t that sure if it was a good or not name, but she got the gist of it, Ale also wasn’t sure how a power that seemed to interface with [Emotions] had ended like that. But then again, half of the things she knew about [Core Powers] didn’t make too much sense.

“Meli-Meli was Alexa’s friend yes,” Ale answered nodding, “But she also pointed her fangs at us, that means that she is also now a target for [Termination].”

And that was the truth of it, Alexa would understand, they were raised up like that after all.

“Alexa will not mind, she may even want to do it herself if anything...” Ale said shaking her head.

“No,” “No!” Both [Golem] and [Big Sister] answered as one.

“....I wasn’t planning on letting her do it,” Ale said after seeing that reaction, “Alexandra probably will not want to let her do it either, but just in case. Why are you both against it?”

Ale’s reasoning and Alexandra aside, she was interested in why [Big Sister] and [Golem] didn’t want that to happen.

"We are coming to terms with the fact that Alexa is truly a five-year-old, the fact that you yourself are twelve and Alexandra is nineteen is still under review," [Golem] answered first, "But the fact that Alexa is truly five means that she needs to live as a five-year-old, that means that combat missions and other similar endeavors are banned for her."

"A little girl should not have to deal with the more grim aspects of our line of work," [Big Sister] said shaking her head, "You...I would rather you also not deal with this, but Vulcanus already seems to have you in the line of sight, so that will be hard."

Well that was outright rude, Ale was perfectly capable of engaging in combat, if anything, of the three she was probably the second best suited for combat scenarios!

"Right, well....What are our plans as a team for this mission?" Ale asked, trying not to sound too insulted about the little trust her teammates had for her. "I assume you two are joining the mission?"

"Yes," [Golem] said nodding, "I am joining, my condition means that most Emotional manipulation Core Powers have a harder time affecting me, we aren't sure if The Child Puppeteer even works like that still, but the original statement hinted to that type of effect."

"I also am joining, I'll probably get overwatch duty again though," [Big Sister] added after [Golem], "But you may need to register too, while your name is there, you need to register as Rhapsody to ensure people don't find out about your secret identity."

Oh right...that....

“What’s the deal with that?” Ale asked confused, “[Gabriel] made Alexa put on the mask while under the recording, and somehow that made all our actions protected? How does that even work?”

“...You weren’t using a mask while using your Core Powers?” [Golem] asked aghast, “You need to put on the mask before using your Core Powers.”

“But how does that even work? People will know who you are if you put on your mask and start using your [Core Powers].” Ale groaned, “Or what? People will think that the ginormous mass of rocks is someone else just because you are using a mask?”

“That is kind of funny, but yes. That’s how it works,” [Big Sister] said giggling, “It’s stupid, it makes no sense, but that is how the world works. Of the many things the Saintsworths did, this is the only one we can be honestly thankful.”

The what now? How was the Saintsworths even involved in this?

“You see, their CEO made it a law, a law against profiling and one that ensured privacy for those who donned a mask,” [Golem] said stretching and sitting in a chair, “Basically if you wear a mask, you are guaranteed a pseudo fake identity that can hold to all the requirements granted by law.”

“How does that even work?” Ale asked confused, “Wouldn’t other people use the same model or style of mask and pretend to be you then?”

“That is where the magic of the Saintsworths Conglomerate works for the good of mankind,” [Big Sister] said laughing, “They know who we are behind the masks, but they ensure no one else can know. Not the

police, not the FBI, CIA or even the POTUS. The Saintsworths Servers know exactly who we are, but only the machine intelligence and not even the higher-ups know...or so they say."

Only the machine intelligence?

"We aren't sure 100% of those claims," [Golem] stated, "That is why it is common to put the mask in a private spot, but under duress so long no one else sees you, you are safe. The thing is that you can't take it off unless you are in a private place."

So that was why [Gabriel] had said to not take it off? But even so...

"That's stupid," Ale said, pointing out [Golem], "If you are a mass of rocks with a mask, and I see a mass of rocks without a mask. I'll know who you are, there is no hidden [Core Power] that can make me think you aren't the same person."

[Golem] nodded at that, "Yeah, but Core Powers are finicky like that. And while I walk most of the time in my Golem form, that is not to say I can't take other forms as you are seeing." [Golem] pointed at his gravel-like current body, "Besides, I have a good friend working on a more permanent solution right now."

"Oh yeah, you got into Haephestus' Forge to find a way to solve your bad trigger." [Big Sister] said nodding, "Any hopes in that ?"

"Don't know, what do you say Ale?" [Golem] turned the question towards Ale. Which was fair, since they did promise to fix him...

“Working on it,” Ale said sighing, “We think that there may be an....option to find a way to fix the issue, but we will need Meli-Meli’s [Blueprint] to get more data, Alexa’s experiment with Gloria and Alan did help settle some doubts....But I think Meli-Meli’s [Core] may have the answer to this problem.”

To be precise, the ability to pull Consciousness Streams out of people, like how Meli-Meli had done with her parents, that was something to look forward, if Ale could do that...Then she wouldn’t need to fix [Golem]’s body, she would just need to make him a new body and shove his Consciousness Stream there.

Then just reignite his [Core] in the new body and it was a done deal, she had two to three [Core Trigger] events lodged in her memory as of now. One wild, and two artificial ones, so she had some data to go about it.

She wasn’t sure why Alan and Gloria had ended like that, but Beatrice had been quite obvious about what she wanted and how she ended like that; the girl was delusional and delirious about being important and being right. Also her view of the world was twisted, and that reflected in her [Core Power].

Ale also wanted a sample of that one, the way she was affecting everyone...Ale hadn’t seen such a thing besides when the theater guy and the scrambled guy acted...

“Then our plan is more obvious than ever, we need to sign for that mission,” [Golem] said nodding, “Let’s go then.”

[Golem] said that and stood up immediately afterward, walking towards the mass of rocks he had left beside the door, fusing his gravel-like body with the mass of rocks and growing in size as his body meshed back with the harder material, rapidly growing in size and weight.

Ale couldn't help but marvel at that, why was someone with a power like this wanting to return to a more fleshy body? Ale didn't understand that, not that she would discard her current fleshy body, she liked these fleshy bits...But she also could see the appeal of a body fully made of mineral...

Perhaps she could adapt that? She was already adapting mechanical bits to her [Blueprint]...So adapting some crystal growths wouldn't be that hard...Perhaps a crystal on her chest to protect the [Heart]? Some on her feet as boots? Maybe some around her hands? Perhaps a nice cute flowing crown of crystals?

Some crystal wings? She would need to see about getting more [Cores] with the right type of powers, then checking if it was possible to reproduce fully those effects. So far, they had only been able to replicate some [Information Core] basic functions, and that may be more because Ale, Alexa, and Alexandra understood how [Information] worked.

The same could be said about their [Shapeshifter Core], it wasn't as much as an actual [Core Power] and more of a way to use their abilities with the [Nanite Swarm].

"Let's go then," [Big Sister] said afterward, standing up and walking towards the entrance door, "Let's go and visit Billy; he is the one collecting names."

[Billy]? Why was he the one collecting names?



“Shouldn’t someone...important do that?” Ale asked, confused; while she understood the importance of [Billy] and how he was relevant as an [Elder], she still thought someone more combat-oriented would be at the helm, like [Gabriel] or...[Gabriel], and perhaps...[Gabriel]?

“Yeah...don’t let him hear you say that,” [Big Sister] said laughing, “The old cot has his hands in most of the technical aspects of Haephestus’ Forge, he is also the one that organizes the roster for the missions.”

He was?

“Yeah, while the missions get approved by Eleanore, it is Billy who decides who goes where, since he is the one giving out equipment and setting us up, he knows better who is suited for what,” [Golem] said as he opened the door and [Big Sister] walked out, “Don’t forget your mask.”

Ale of course didn’t, and pointed at her left arm where the mask was sitting in the bracelet mode.

“Gabriel is more of an assassin, scout and rescue operator.” [Golem] continued, “He may be the one leading this one, depending on the info we get.”

Ale nodded at that, she didn’t mind that, [Gabriel] while weird about mission priorities, he had proven his prowess, so she could respect that.

“I heard there are a couple other Lieutenants around,” [Big Sister] said turning to [Golem], “Have you heard about them?”

“Hydra and Empress?” [Golem] asked, Ale did remember a couple extra Lieutenants standing with [Eleanore], [Billy] and [Gabriel], “I haven’t found too much about them, they seem to work directly with high ranking Villains, or with Vulcanus.”

“Hmm.....Hydra and Empress....I can only assume what they can do,” [Big sister] said nodding, “Probably a Beast Core and...Dunno, a Mind Core? Would Vulcanus even allow one of those running around?”

“They let [Eleanore] run around.” Ale said pointing out, “And she is one of those right?”

Both [Golem] and [Big Sister] stopped for a second and thought about that. What? Ale was not wrong. [Eleanore]’s [Core Power] affected the Mind, even if not directly.

“She is not...technically a Mind Core user, it’s like [The Theater Master], while her Core can affect your Mind. It isn’t working directly in tampering the Mind.” [Golem] said slowly and measuredly, almost as if he wanted to convince himself.

“How is that distinction even working?” Ale asked, “If that is the case, Meli-Meli isn’t a [Mind Core] since she also doesn’t work in the [Mind] but on [Emotions] and [Feels].”

Ale felt so wrong by using those words, but it was how they had categorized that [Core Power].

“But she twists the Mind,” [Big Sister] pointed out, “We categorize the Mind Cores as such by those that willingly twist an user by direct instructions from the Core Owners. [The Theater Master] has no direct input or control in how people act or turn, same as [The Scrambler], who I and everyone else loathes.

But he doesn't manipulate his victims, while he does change them fundamentally. That can't be said about The Child Puppeteer."

So...That was the metric they used?

"So long a [Core User] doesn't control someone else directly, then it isn't a [Mind Core]?" Ale asked aloud to make sure she was understanding this.

"It may not be a perfect metric," [Golem] said sighing, "But we don't have much to work here, the Core Users have been around for less than thirty years, we are still learning about these."

Right...Well, "It is a stupid metric," Ale said aloud, "It is a stupid metric that will cause problems, what will you qualify a [Core User] who can change a body, mind, and Consciousness Stream but whose original power doesn't directly affect the [Mind] then?"

That is to say, if they used that metric...what was Alexa's [Core Power]? She could affect the Mind of others, well, maybe not others, but she could affect them. [Core] could directly affect their Consciousness Streams.

It had affected [Main Core], it admitted to being able to tamper with Ale and Alexandra, and to some degree with Alexa. So was it a [Mind Core]? Even if they had no evidence of it interacting with the [Mind]?

Ale was not sure. And she didn't want to find out about that.

For now, she needed to enlist officially in this hunt first, and then deal with that however that ended up facing up, it was going to be the first time she was willingly walking into a fight. Not because it was a test or a fight for survival (Or food). But because she willingly wanted to do it.

So it was going to be interesting.